Griffith History

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES OF GRIFFITH HISTORY

Two versions of how Griffith got its name:

1. From a contractor who built the grade for the Grand Trunk Railroad. At that time, he lived on what is now Main Street, 1½ miles west of Broad, which was the boundary line between St. John and North Township.

2. One of three men from the East who purchased a vast acreage centering about intersection of five railroads which cross Broad Street. D. W. Griffith, was one of the promoters.

Griffith was first called Dwiggins Junction; also called New Chicago by Dwiggins. It was a German settlement of 100 to 150 people before Dwiggins came into the area in 1891. Some of the earliest settlers were Jacob Helfen, who built a log cabin. In 1884, Peter Young built a house on 1 acre south of the railroad (west of Broad). In 1885, John Miller built a saloon between Peter Young and the tracks and in 1886, Jacob Miller built a shoe store just south of Peter Young.

In November, 1890, an early settler, Jacob Helfen, who owned 80 acres (purchased in 1863), sold several acres (2 half sections and 9 quarter sections) to Elmer Dwiggins for $8,400. In 1891, Dwiggins Bros. bought all farms from Colfax to ½ mile west of Broad and from the Joliet Cutoff to Kopelke (Elm Street). "On May 20, 1891, Elmer Dwiggins sold Lot 21, Block 14 in the Town of Griffith to Mrs. R. S. Webner for $250, to be paid in meal tickets on Webner's Lunch Room, 167 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, numbered 41-4100. When all said tickets are redeemed, first party agrees to convey said lot by a good and sufficient warranty deed, free from all incumberances." This sale was typical of many made by the Dwiggins Bros. as they attempted to sell lots in the new town of Griffith, sight unseen to people at the World's Fair of 1892, and other places.

In 1892, Ellis and Southworth built a store on the east side of Broad south of the tracks which housed the first Post Office. Later, Southworth, put up a 10' x 10' building next to the railroad for a Post Office.

The Dwiggins' business venture in Griffith failed. An interesting but incomplete story lies between the lines of the abstracts of the property involved. In Sept. 1897, William Osterhout sued J. R. Willard and Elmer & Jay Dwiggins for $541,364.24, which he claimed they owed him. Their land, Oak Forest, Ridgewood, Manufacturers, Homestead, and Jolidon Additions, were attached. Osterhaut finally paid $15,000 at Sheriff's Auction for the above lands. In 1899, Elmer and Jay Dwiggins, who were then in Buenos Aires, Argentina, gave their power of attorney to Robert Dwiggins, to complete negotiations with Osterhout. After this, the trail becomes confused by the death of Osterhout and various involvements concerning his estate.

In 1912, the Griffith Land Co. (Christenson and de St. Aubin) formed and acquired the land between Broad and Cline, north of the tracks that Dwiggins had not owned.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

POPULATION in various years

1892 - 60
1910 - 200
1939 - 2,000
1940 - 2,500
1941 - 2,900
1945 - 3,500

SCHOOLS

North School - located east side of Broad Street in 300 block. Built before 1891. Miss Bennet, teacher. Part of building was moved into town and used as a store. Part was moved south of town, to become South School.

South School - 506 S. Broad Street. Moved to this location in 1892.

Troy School - located on Redar Road, near the dump. Miss Lennertz, teacher.

Franklin School - present location, see article, History of Griffith Schools.

Excerpt from beginning of Abstract from any lot in Original Town of Griffith, laid out by Dwiggins.

Abstract of Title to------(location)
Made July 7, 1891
For
Jay Dwiggins & Co.
by
Amos Allman & Son
Abstractors Real Estate Agents Crown Point

U.S. Govt to State of Ind.	Letters Patent Mar. 24, 1853
State of Ind. to Jos. Hoffman	State Patent Jan. 20, 1854
Jacob Helfen to Elmer Dwiggins	Mar. 15, 1890